

The Journey Continues

*An account of the
25th anniversary forum of the
Nova Scotia Advisory Council
on the Status of Women*





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Message from the Chair



Anniversaries encourage reflection. "Big" ones draw a crowd. So as our 25th anniversary approached, we naturally reflected on our progress and looked forward to celebrating.

***"To look backward for a while
is to refresh the eye,
to restore it,
and to render it the more fit
for its prime function
of looking forward."***

— Margaret Fairless Barber

But in contemplating how far you've come, you can't help but notice how much farther you have yet to go. We decided to consider the road ahead in a one-day forum called ***The Journey Continues.***

We convened activists, service workers, and community leaders of all ages and backgrounds and decided that, instead of looking for answers or solutions, we should start by finding the right questions to ask.

Over the course of the day, there was poignant, honest sharing, joyful laughter, frank observations, and hopeful energy. It was a great celebration of achievement, and by the end of it, we could see that we had our work cut out for us. Women want more forums, in other parts of the province, with greater inclusion. In fact, inclusion was a key theme of the day. Another clear message of the day was the need for women's participation in electoral politics. And there are many questions around which we all need to do further work.

It was a great day. We must now find the ways to reach out further and to answer our questions, as the journey continues ...

— Rita Warner, Chair

One Day

September 13, 1977. That was the day the Government of Nova Scotia proclaimed "An Act to Establish an Advisory Council on the Status of Women." It was one action, taking only a few moments of one day, but behind it were years of activism, organization, and struggle.

Women in Nova Scotia had been organized since the late 1800s, winning the right to vote in 1918 after decades of struggle. Following a second wave of activism in the 1960s, the 1970 Canadian Royal Commission on the Status of Women published its report. In 1975, the Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women was appointed, bringing 95 recommendations to government the following year, in the report, *Herself/Elle-Même*. The Task Force members were Mairi St. John Macdonald (Chair), Carrie Best, M. Edna de Sanctis, Judith Harrington Giffin, Joan M. McLellan, Lorette Woolsey Toews and Mary Crawford Wall. Two of these women, Judith Giffin and Lorette Woolsey, were honoured guests at this forum.

Celebrating the day of the proclamation celebrates the achievements since that day. The Council has made over 1000 recommendations to government in this time and has provided information and assistance to thousands of callers and visitors, on issues such as economic security, family issues, violence, health, education, and political participation.

The Advisory Council has held conferences and symposia, conducted research and published reports, including the groundbreaking *Making Changes*. This handbook for abused women is in its third edition. Since December 2001, 15,000 copies have been requested.

More recently, the Council, with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health as partner and the Canadian Institute for Health Research as the funder, the Council launched a \$1.7-million, five-year



Group discussions during the forum.

research initiative on women's unpaid work and caregiving, the Healthy Balance Research Program.

But September 13 was not just an opportunity to look back on our progress. With so many issues still on the agenda, and new ones continuing to arise, it was an opportunity to look ahead, to chart our course toward equality, fairness, and dignity for all women.

The Journey Continues

How far have we come in the past 25 years? It's hard to imagine that, in 1977 in Nova Scotia,

- violence against women was not a public issue
- equal pay for work of equal value was a radical concept
- very few women held public office and no woman had ever been in Cabinet

Hey, wait a minute ...

That's right, we haven't come as far as we hoped. Not only are these long-standing issues still unresolved, but over the years they have been joined by issues like poverty, body image and self-esteem, work/life balance, participation in trades/technology/sciences, underpaid and unpaid family care, and care for an aging population.

During the past year alone, the Council has been involved in issues relating to Divorce Act reform, political participation, restorative justice, pharmaceutical advertising, techno voyeurism, and no-fault automobile insurance.

And then there is the issue of inclusion: who decides what is important, who is involved in the work of change? As in society at large, many groups have not had an equal voice in the discourse on women's issues.

The Council decided that, on its 25th anniversary, considering the future would be at least as important as celebrating the past. Women who were involved with the movement historically were invited, as were young women just beginning their careers and families.

To tap this resource in less than a day was a formidable task, but creative meeting techniques are well suited to the challenge. The World Café is internationally acclaimed for fostering innovative and collaborative thinking and dialogue. It involves having a number of related conversations in changing small groups. The structure is natural and relaxed and capitalizes on cross-pollination of ideas.

"It's basically the natural way that people communicate," says Susan Skjei, facilitator of the forum. "Not coincidentally, the model was developed by a woman." Susan is a human resource development consultant who has worked with community, business, and government organizations around the world for more than 20 years.



Another idea to keep the day manageable, yet meaningful, was a focus on questions. "You could ask women what they think the solution is to this or that problem," said Chair Rita Warner. "But we wanted to start from absolute scratch and find out what they think are the right questions to be asking in the first place, given all the happenings and changes of the past 25 years."

Talking Power

"Well, we expected 50 people, and there are 68 here today," announced facilitator Susan Skjei at the beginning of The Journey Continues Forum, adding, with a smile, "Oops!"

The extra attendance was welcome, judging from the laughter and hugs spreading through the room as the participants settled in.

"I'm looking forward to hearing about the experiences of other women," said Council member Linda Carvery. "Getting insight as to what direction I could go in my life to make things better for other women coming after me."

"I see it as a chance to find out what's going on. Is there a place for younger women? How do you get into it? That's not always clear," said Allison Carpenter, who is in her final year of law school.

For some participants the forum represented more specific opportunities. "When I first heard about this, I thought 'Fabulous!' The women's community hasn't been together in Halifax for a very long time. Some of these women I haven't seen for 10 years.



Stella Lord, Allison Carpenter

But along with the love and compassion and the wonderful feeling in the room, I would really like a commitment from this group when they go back home to start some community development around women with disabilities," said Judy Hughes, the Executive Director of the Disabled Persons Commission. "I would like something concrete."

Chair Rita Warner opened the forum with a warm welcome and a brief statement of purpose. "We have many achievements to celebrate. We have put the issue of violence against women on the public agenda and kept it there. Women now have equal representation in law, in medicine, and in commerce programs at universities... We can celebrate much better access to reproductive health care than we had in the '70s.

"But there are challenges still facing us. Women are still far more vulnerable to poverty than men are, at every stage of their lives. Women undertake most of the family caregiving in our society, and that work is substantially unacknowledged and unpaid. Violence against women hasn't gone away, and we are alerted to an increasing concern about issues such as voyeurism and Internet-disseminated pornography. With an aging population, with women making up three-quarters of the very old, issues related to the cost of long-term care are becoming increasingly important."

With that, the delegation broke into small groups for Circles of Introduction. Participants had been asked to bring a symbol of their personal journey and now shared the stories of these tokens with their groups. The eclectic range of items was a

testament to the diversity in the room. Along with photographs and newspaper clippings were brain-teaser games and hiking boots. One empty-handed delegate exclaimed to her group "I am the symbol!", while another explained that her symbol would be all the women she has met over the years.

Former Advisory Council President Francene Cosman recounted her experience of a six-hour shower celebrating woman as goddess, complete with labyrinth. Engineering student Candace Donovan explained that, as a child of divorce, her symbol is her mother's engagement ring—which she wears as a reminder to always be able to support herself and her family.

Participants generously shared their personal journeys, filling the room with laughter, and a few tears. Some displayed their symbols on a table in the room for the remainder of the day.



Personal journeys: mementos

The delegation then came back together for a reflection on the history of Council and of the women's movement in Nova Scotia. A long banner had been attached to the wall, bearing a timeline of milestones: 1970—Royal Commission on the Status of Women publishes report; 1981—Alexa McDonough becomes first female party leader elected to legislature in Canada; 1992—Halifax gets its first female firefighter.

After reading off some of the milestones, Susan invited participants to add their own milestones to the timeline. Now the timeline included items like

- won the battle against an eating disorder
- became single parent: very hard but very good
- sued my Dad for back child support
- read *The Woman's Room*, left my rotten husband

Once again, participants were invited to share their stories, this time with the large group. Lorette Woolsey, a member of the 1975 Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women, had affixed a photo of the task force to the timeline. "It was amazing, those early years of the second wave. The energy, the excitement, the hope, the feeling that we could change so much. We were greatly privileged by the experience of the task force, which was a highlight in our lives, going around the province listening to women and having women's voices heard and validated, which was a new experience in the public forum. This public validation of what women had to say about their lives and about what needed to be done was just an incredible experience. And we had a task force that represented the traditional conservative women's groups, we had people like Judy (Giffin) and myself who were more radical, we had Carrie Best with her strong activist background. There was a whole spectrum of people, and we were able to blend that group of women into a very

cohesive group. And we had support from the community. It's very exciting to see all that has grown out of that."

A former Council president who went on to become the minister responsible for the status of women, Francene Cosman, spoke about the challenges of the early years. "In 1982 I became the fourth president in four years, which does speak to the turmoil that was going on in getting recognition for women's issues during those years. It just wasn't happening. We had no research staff, and I just think what happens with the council today is so incredible because they actually have staff. We did have the first fieldworker and that started the outreach programs. We also produced a "best-selling" book on family violence, a handbook on battering. In Canadian terms it was a best seller—we handed out thousands and thousands of these and went through three reprints. So those four years really focused on issues of family violence, pornography, and prostitution. I became an expert on pornography somehow—how is that possible?"

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman pointed out that the historical beginnings were actually much farther back than the timeline's 1970 start. Linda Carvery concurred "The '70s was definitely not the beginning... We don't spend enough time talking to our senior women... I'm learning so much from my 81-year-old mother. She told me she was part of a group called the Friendly Girls Club. I said, 'How did you ever have time to be part of a Friendly Girls Club with 8 children and more coming?' When I hear stories of things that women



Linda Carvery

had done with the minimum amount of resources that they had back then, what they did not have and what they were able to accomplish, it gives me hope that I can do anything I want."

Joan Hicks regaled the group with the story of her first visit to Province House, as a member of the steering committee for the first Advisory Council. "Those were the days of the beginning of pant suits. And I'm thinking 'What am I going to wear? What am I going to wear?' Well I got this awful lime green pantsuit. I thought I was the cat's meow, and I laid it out on the bed, got the kids off to school, and got ready to go. When I got there I was running late, and I don't know where the Red Chamber Room is, and I end up in this hallway of offices. There is a secretary there, and she called me in, didn't say anything, opened a drawer and took out a pair of scissors. She lifted up my arm and cut off a price tag. And the thing that hit me was how none of us do these things without the support of everyone else. That woman could have thought 'here's this woman who thinks she's so smart in her pantsuit' and let that happen. But instead she saved me."



*Patricia Doyle-Bedwell
shares her story*

A theme raised during the historical reflections that would recur throughout the day was women in politics. Former Council Chair Patricia Doyle-Bedwell recounted her early ruminations on the topic, spurred by the late Eileen O'Connell. "She took me out to lunch one day and said 'you

ought to really think about running for public office' and I said 'oh gosh no I can't see that.' But if we all think that way none of us are gonna get there. So that's why I have tremendous respect for Alexa and Francene and for Eleanor Norrie, for Jane Purves and for Maureen MacDonald—all the women that have gone forward and got their voices heard and been in there. One of the best things about even contemplating that for myself is to start believing in our experiences and in our voice, and I still struggle with that. It's even scary for me to get up here and say that I'm one of the ones that's thinking about it. And we can sit down and think of all the barriers, but we really have to start thinking about how to make it happen, because our future is political."



Jessica LeBlanc, Tara McMullen

Next, the Young Women Speak Out panel, with Jessica LeBlanc and Tara Lynn McMullen, was moderated by Candy Palmater. Jessica read her poem *Don't Cry, Mommy*, which won first prize in the Council's 25th Anniversary Writing Contest and can be seen on the Council web site, <www.gov.ns.ca/staw>. Tara's stirring address is reprinted here.

Candy then opened the floor to questions and comments. An engineering student shared her experience: "When I started, one of the professors said that the graduating class of the previous year had, out of 60 students, one or two girls. Now we have six, and that's in electrical engineering, which

has the lowest ratio of men to women. Industrial engineering and environmental engineering are 50/50. In one of my physics classes, I was the only female out of nine students. And the professor would walk in the morning and say 'good morning gentlemen' and I was like 'excuse me'. By the end of the year he was fine, and it was a joke I would tease him about."

Jessica pointed out that there is very little knowledge of the women's movement among young women, a big gap in history teaching. The group discussed the effectiveness of "the old boys' club," with some participants advocating a female equivalent or a revival of The Friendly Girls Club. Tara added that women should be on the lookout for opportunities to support young women and "bring them forward."



Minister Jane Purves, with Jessica, Tara, and Brigitte Neumann

Minister Jane Purves presented gifts of appreciation to the panel and then turned the forum over to Susan Skjei, who introduced the Journey Café.

Participants were asked to sit at tables of four and talk about the most important questions they felt women should be considering at this time in their history. After 15 minutes, three women from each table would move to another table, leaving behind a "host" to orient the next three women to that table's conversation. This process would be repeated twice more, with participants engaging in deeper questioning each time.



The Journey Café

Paper tablecloths quickly filled with notes, doodles, and diagrams. At the end of the first 15-minute period, groups reported their experiences, including questions like: "Can we take on all of the freedoms that we strive for?" and "Social change creates social conflict — are we comfortable with that?"

A second round of questions yielded questions such as: "Is there a role for the Advisory Council in helping young women get involved with the movement? How do we maintain a grassroots approach? How do we involve young black women? How do we cope with an aging population? What do we have that we might lose if we're not vigilant?"

One such group shared their results: "Is government decreasing its commitment to inclusion of people with disabilities? Why is government doing this? Why does the public allow government to do this? What part do women with disabilities have to play in improving this?"

The groups reconfigured one last time and then turned their attention to the day's final exercise: identifying the major themes of the café questions. Twenty-four key questions were charted, and themes emerged around youth participation, sexuality, technology, political participation, and the unearned privilege enjoyed by white, able-bodied people.



Brigitte Neumann, Executive Director

To discuss these themes, the group formed a large circle. Linda Carvery injected a little play before the work began by leading the circle in a re-energizing sing-a-long. Then the dialogue began, with Susan pointing out that the roots of the word "dialogue" mean "shared meaning," while the roots of "discussion" are the same as those of "percussion".

Insights and opinions abounded. One participant questioned the worth of some gains. "When I was a young feminist, women wanted to have the man's world. Now I am 47, and I have the job that the man had, the salary, the benefits. But I face all kinds of toxicity in the workplace, and I'm thinking that maybe I don't want what the man has, maybe what I want as a feminist is a new world that is more equitable and just and communitarian and not individualistic and not dog eat dog like the male-dominated environment. So my feeling now is that instead of expecting to change this environment, I'm going to walk away and create a new system. I don't know quite how I'll do that but I believe that with other women we can change, so that our daughters and our sons grow up and enter into a system that is more ecumenical, more collective, more social, and less profit oriented."

The importance of women supporting each other, particularly in the face of unfairness, struck an obvious chord in the room, with many participants chiming in on the need for fearlessness,

and the problem of women treating each other as competition.

Participants even questioned the need for active outreach to young women. "We beat ourselves up on this one, but you know, when the personal becomes political, they will find their way into the movement."

Eventually, time ran out, and the formal agenda was closed with a commitment to circulate this record of the day. Many conversations continued, however, as the group enjoyed refreshments and entertainment. There was a sense of accomplishment and progress, of anticipation, and for some, of discovery.



Council member Sonja Power, with her sister Allison



Angela Johnson

"I thought it would be a lot of militant women with agendas that don't apply to me, and that I might cut out after lunch," admitted Angela Johnson of the Dalhousie Women's Centre. "But there

were people here from all age groups and all walks of life and all cultures, and I was really surprised at how comfortable it was."

"I knew it would be welcoming," said Lorette Woolsey.

"Nova Scotians are good at hearing each other and drawing on the huge grass-roots strength of this province. You can bring diverse experiences together in a way that's very powerful and very life affirming and very rooted. But it was more than I could have expected. The constant movement to stimulate each other's ideas and keep an exchange of ideas going, drawing out the common themes. The process was very gentle, beautifully guided I thought, so that as each person articulated their needs or experiences there was a tremendous link-



Lorette Woolsey

age. And I think that these days we struggle to find a vision. There was a clarity even 10 years ago that there isn't quite anymore. The issues are more complex, and in a sense they are hidden by the successes of the women's movement.



Judith Coffin

"But what stood out most to me, what touched me most, was the First Nations women and women of colour and the women with disabilities who were front and center addressing white privilege and other kinds of privilege and 'how do we have our voices heard?' I was so impressed by their passion, their power, strength. It brought back for me the feeling of the early women's movement when we came to the recognition that we could never get power by having it given to us by men—that you have to take it, recognize your own power and take it, and that's what these women were doing today. I saw women taking their power."



Maureen O'Connell, Joy Warner, Denise Moore and Sandra McEadyen



Sister Joan O'Keefe and Luinda Monticambert

The "Big" Questions

- How do we come together without losing our differences?
- Do we wish to be salad or soup?
- How do we ensure disability issues get priority on the political agenda?
- How do we hang on to gains?
- How can we better coalesce?
- What conditions would enable women to have real freedom?
- How are gains made/at what cost?
- Have the issues changed over time, or is it just the context?
- How do we inspire young women to make choices that move us ahead?
- How can we promote quality of life in an aging, largely female population?
- Why is unfairness so acceptable to so many people?
- How can we help encourage more cafés across the province?
- How can we improve communication between men and women?
- Have we acknowledged the dominant culture's influence in communication?
- Would the Advisory Council establish a young women's council?
- How can we stop the cycle and be more successful as individuals and communities?
- How can we bring up our children and also have our own identity?
- What are the conditions/downsides that maintain the "freedoms" we have?
- How can we move forward with balance?
- How can we communicate better as women of many different backgrounds?
- How can we make new technologies work for us?
- How can older women communicate to younger the need to maintain what we have?
- What is recognition for unpaid work?
- What do we need to do to temper social change and social conflict?
- How can women working with social conflict assist young women to take the next step?

And Furthermore...

"Although people who have been in the movement for a long time have done a lot of good hard work, they have to look at the fact that the issues are in a different context for young women. If you want it to not die, if you don't want it to backslide, that's where it's happening. Like for instance I'm getting ready to go to Titz n Glitz, something I go to every year with my friends, and I get comments from some of the older women in the movement about the name, you know? You gotta understand that we are moving in a different direction. So today we heard from young women with different issues, and we can't just say 'yeah isn't that interesting, now let's get back to what we think the issue is.' Listen to what's being said."

"The only solution is a political solution to most of our problems."

"I saw so many themes coming out of today that were very interesting and juicy, so the trick is going to be how do we distill out the ones that are really current for today, that we can take action on. The ones I heard the loudest and clearest had to do with taking political action."

"What I was amazed with was that there was a lot of diversity in the room without a lot of contention. And people expressed deep feeling. I felt the whole thing was tremendously genuine, and that's pretty rare."

"I imagine that women who have a negative opinion of feminism still expect equal pay for equal work, and to go into any occupation they want."

"Sports is a big issue for me. Like, even though we have the WNBA and all, people still look at it like it doesn't matter as much because it's women doing it."

"Some of the stories from girls on work terms (in trades and technology), it's like you go to the bathroom and you have the porn wall. One girl was in the office of one of the highest people in the company, and his screen saver was this bikini girl. At first she thought it was a joke, but then she saw that he had a printed-off version on his bulletin board."

"There was a lot of support in '75/'76 that gave us a push. Time for a push again ladies."

"When I first heard about this I was very excited because it made me think about the 25 years of my life that I have been involved with women's issues, and actually I felt bitter-sweet. I felt sad that some of the things that we wanted to happen haven't happened yet, and I felt happy that some of the things that we envisioned have come to pass. So it was a touchstone for me."

Young Women Speak Out:

The Address of Taralyn McMullen



Tara McMullen

I would first of all like to tell you how honoured I am to be here today to celebrate the anniversary of the Advisory Council with so many incredible women. What a wonderful day to be celebrating

and what a wonderful way to celebrate it. Twenty-five years of recognition of the needs of women is certainly something to stand up and take notice of.

As a 22-year-old female, it's difficult for me to believe that it was only three years before I was born that women in Nova Scotia finally began to gain recognition in terms of their needs, identities, and issues. Until a few years ago, the reality of the recentness of the progression of Women's Rights had always eluded me. I knew about the suffragettes because I played one in my public school's production of *Mary Poppins*, and to me, that was the beginning and end of the struggle for women. I figured that since women finally got the vote, everything had fallen into place. In reality, that was just the beginning. But the question of this afternoon is "What is on the road before us? What can I expect in my future?" The future is a mysterious thing, something that is both exciting and terrifying to me. What I see the

most on the road ahead of me is some incredible decisions that I am already beginning to have to consider.

Girls and young women today may feel like they have it easy, but our generation, like every other before us, has our share of problems. There are SO MANY conflicting messages being sent to us every day that I don't know one female who hasn't been affected by them. Personally, I feel like I'm being told to be a strong, smart young woman, but when I stand up for what I believe in, I am alienated by other females because I'm being hormonal, or I worry that I'm stepping on someone's toes. We are told that our girlfriends are our sisters, but we are also told that other females are our enemies, competition for the best men and jobs, and should be regarded as such. I am told that I should accept my body as it is, but I open any magazine on the market and find anorexic models staring back at me.

I have struggled against all of these paradoxes. I battled an eating disorder for two years in high school. To this day, I don't feel like it was because I thought I was fat or unattractive. All that I really remember about those times is that it was a way to control my life and to prove to everyone

around me that I could be an IDEAL. It was a way to stand out. Everyone seems to like skinny girls. Kate Moss is ONE popular toothpick and she is the type of women that our daughters, sisters, friends are modelling themselves after. Why are women and girls today compelled to starve themselves? I don't know the answer to this question, but I really hope that in the future, before a woman starts to count the calories in her meal in front of her nine-year-old daughter, that she'll think twice about what she's doing and the harm that she is causing.

Until last week, I was the only Women's Studies major at my school. Now, I'm one of two, and even now when I tell people that I'm in Women's Studies, I still get the typical responses: "Oh, so are you going to stop shaving your legs" or "Oh, so you hate men?" **Give me a break.** I believe in feminism and I define that word on my own terms, no one else's. To me, it's not a matter of whether or not I shave my legs, or whether or not I hate men, it's a matter of being comfortable with my femininity, my womanliness and all that makes me, me. It's a matter of bringing awareness to others about issues that affect us all, because women's issues aren't just women's issues. They are issues for EVERYONE. We should all be concerned about breast cancer, AIDS, single motherhood and the poverty that comes with it. We should all be concerned that our government refuses to acknowledge marriages between two people of the same sex. Why is it that when gender is mentioned, people seem to forget that regardless of gender, we are all still human beings. We're PEOPLE. It is not just a woman's issue, it is a PEOPLE issue.

So why then are many of us still not taking responsibility as a society for the continuing inequalities we live with on a day-to-day basis? Take the working world for example. The most recent piece of information I found said that women are still only making about 70 cents for every dollar a male makes doing a similar job. Some may argue this figure, but no one can deny the fact that the glass ceiling is still over our head...and although we might be looking up a few skirts now and then, it's still mostly men walking above us. I think that women face some interesting challenges on the road ahead in terms of the working world. There are some amazing changes being made to company policies that acknowledge that women might

want to work AND have kids too. Why not bring them together? On-site daycares at workplaces are just the beginning on a long road towards the same freedoms that men enjoy in the working world. I don't think a man will ever be overlooked for a job because he is in his "child-bearing years" and "we would just lose him in a few months when he gets pregnant." This type of discrimination still happens. It's happened before my very eyes.

Bringing children to work with you offers another interesting challenge on the road ahead that I

know many women are dealing with today. It's the SUPER-WOMAN or SUPERMOM complex that just about every woman seems to be consumed by. Superwoman gets up in the morning, makes coffee for her and her husband, puts bread in the toaster, wakes up her children, feeds them, makes their lunches, and

puts them on the school bus. In the meantime, she is making lunch for her and her husband and is washing the dishes from the night before. After the kids are gone, she rushes into the shower, gets out, gets dressed, and attempts to imitate the style her hairdresser gave her the week before. She finally makes it out of the house in time for rush hour. An hour later she is at work at her desk and puts in an eight-hour day. During her lunch hour, she drops off the dry-cleaning and goes to the bank, because they're always closed by the time she gets off work. Finally, the workday is over. She comes home to her latch-key kids and attempts to clean up the room that the tornado apparently tore apart before she got home. She gets changed into her soccer-mom gear and gets the children dinner. After dinner, it's game time. Tom has soccer and Sally has swimming lessons. Sally is dropped off first, and then Tom has an attentive fan at his practice. After practice, she rounds the

*It is not just
a woman's issue,
it is a
PEOPLE issue.*

kids up and takes them for ice cream. She then drives the whole lot of them home to meet her husband who is just walking in the door from his workday. Superwoman calls her 75-year-old mother who is caring for her father who has Alzheimer's. Her mother is tired and needs some extra help. She fell on the stairs again today, and dad wandered off in the mall. Superwoman hangs up, feeling guilty. She puts the children to bed, puts in a load of laundry, and takes out the ironing board. She irons in front of the television for an hour, just until she is cross-eyed, and then wanders to bed in a trance. Lying in bed she thinks about the fitness plan she had for the week ... when she's going to start eating better and whether that lump she just found in her breast is something she should worry about. She falls asleep and wakes up the next morning to do it all over again. I don't know about Superwoman, but that doesn't sound like so much fun to me. Where has our time gone? When did we forget that we are important too? On the road ahead, I see more women taking control of their destinies. I see them simplifying. I see them taking an active interest in their own personal health and welfare and letting go of the myth that in order to be a successful woman, you must do EVERYTHING! The woman of the future will learn to delegate, organize, and most of all prioritize. And on the list of things to look after, she will not put herself last.

The whole SUPERWOMAN issue brings another question to mind: What about families? Will the woman down the road be having children? Will she choose to have one rather than two or three? And will she wait until she's 35 before she has them. Growing trends in Nova Scotia and Canada

reflect this. I spoke to my mom about this phenomenon and she told me that when I was entering kindergarten, almost all the moms in the playground were about 29 or 30 years old. Meaning they had kids around the age of 25. And almost all of them were married. I think that the future will see playgrounds full of a few 20-year-old single moms, a handful of 29-or 30-year-old married moms and many who 35-40 or above. And then there are same-sex unions: these families are a huge part of our future. Same-sex partners are having children together, and a lot more kids will

have two mommies or two daddies, and I am so excited for the day when a child will come home from school and say "Mommy, Daddy, Sally told me today that she has two mommies" and that the parents will give their child an honest and open response, free from prejudice and narrow-mindedness. This, of course, will come with time and better education.

Knowledge is power. It's also contagious. I think that down the road, we're going to see some amazing changes because as a society, we are beginning to "get it."

Knowledge is spreading especially among the female population of Canada. It's amazing to me that females are beginning to outnumber males on Canadian campuses. Good for us. All those years of struggling just to be allowed into a university only to be humiliated in front of your male classmates are over. We have seen the end of this time, and although women are still lacking in fields like sciences and maths, we're working on it, and I believe that the next generation of women will show everyone that we were just waiting to knock everyone's socks off with our math skills.

I think that down the road, we're going to see some amazing changes because as a society, we are beginning to "get it."

But regardless of whether women pursue education in math or English, the road before us is filled with powerful women, making decisions for themselves and living their lives on their own terms. Even if a woman doesn't go on to pursue higher education, she will at least be educated enough to understand her choices and responsibilities as a woman. She will know how to say no, she will know how to protect herself from unwanted pregnancies, and AIDS, and she will be strong enough to stand up to her abusive partner and get out. This power of knowledge can't just be limited to those of us born here in Canada. We must make information available to Canadian women who have immigrated here from other parts of the world. So many times women stay with their abusive partners because they don't know how to get away... we're working on it now with publications like *Making Changes*, but we still have a long, long way to go.

For the past half an hour or so, you have been looking at the faces of our future. You've been looking at just three of many young women who are ready and willing to make positive and proactive changes in their own lives and the lives of others. We are strong, stubborn, and ready to give it our all. We will be your doctors, your politicians, and your lawyers. We will be your domestic engineers, your counsellors, and your nurses. We're the future, and although it might sometimes look scary, we're ready for the job! As Nellie McClung said many years ago,

*"Never retreat,
never explain,
never apologize —
get the thing done and
let them howl!"*

They can start howling now, because here we come!



From the Feedback Forms:

I came away feeling connected and more focused on what I need to do.
Do this again!

I was nervous because I am a young woman and did not feel like I belonged,
but everyone was wonderful and made me feel very welcome. I wish there was
more time to discuss and attempt to solve the problems. I hope to get invited to
another forum and am looking forward to getting more involved.

It was an opportunity to realize that I am not thinking anything outrageous.

You could feel the power of the group at the end, in the circle sharing.
Loved meeting new super-interesting women!

Great event! Need more!

Would have liked to be able to continue discussions when getting deeper
into issues.

I was pleased to see the gathering of all the women from all walks of life.
Each is different but struggling with the same fight and for the same light.
We need a 2003 forum!

It would be interesting to take a focused question, work on it, and develop an
action plan.

Excellent forum. I hope we can get you more support from the government.

Registration — Journey Continues Forum 2002

Marilyn Berry

Executive Director, Adsum House, Halifax

Allison Carpenter

Law student at Dalhousie University
[now articling]

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman

Professor of Sociology, SMU [1986–present]
Professor, Graduate Seminar in Women's Studies,
Dalhousie University [2000]

Francene Cosman

Advisory Council Member 1982–88
4th Advisory Council President
Former Minister responsible for the Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Iona Crawley

Adult educator and community activist

Mary DeWolfe

Executive Director, Chrysalis House, Kentville

Candace Donovan

Guest of Advisory Council Chair Rita Warner

Patricia Doyle-Bedwell

Advisory Council Member [Central Region]
1994–01
Advisory Council Chair 1996–01

Judith Giffin

Member of the 1975 Nova Scotia Task Force
on the Status of Women

Meaghan Herman-Shouse

Guest of Advisory Council Member
Nancy Leaman

Joan Hicks

Long-term member Metro Council on
Continuing Education; Chair of Word on
the Street; 2002 Recipient YWCA Women's
Recognition Award

Judy Hughes

Disabled Persons Commission

Stephanie Hunter

Coordinator, FemJEP
[Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy]

Angela Johnson

Dalhousie Women's Centre,
Dalhousie University

Penny Kitchen

Elizabeth Fry Society; Metro Resource Centre for
Independent Living; Cerebral Palsy Association
Amanda Roberts: Ms. Kitchen's attendant

Cynthia Jordan

Guest of Advisory Council Member
Linda Carvery

Jean Knockwood

Coordinator, First Nations Student Services,
Nova Scotia Community College

Advisory Council Member [Fundy Region] 1996–99

Jessica LeBlanc

Speaker: Young Women's Panel; First Place Winner,
NSAC Writing Contest 2002

Macha MacKay

Continuously active since 1960s in
women's communities

Jennifer McCarron

Guest of Advisory Council Member
Doreen Paris

Tara McMullen

Speaker: Young Women's Panel

Naiomi Metallic

Guest of Advisory Council Member
Candy Palmater

Maureen O'Connell

Skills and Learning Branch, Nova Scotia
Department of Education

Sister Joan O'Keefe

Community work with the Sisters of Charity
in Halifax; previously Coordinator,
Single Parent Centre

Allison Power

Sister and guest of Advisory Council Member
Sonja Power

The Honourable Jane Purves

Minister, Nova Scotia Department of Education
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Pat Rustad

National Council of Women
Former mayor of Beaconsfield, Quebec

Marcie Shwery-Stanley

Advisory Council Member
[Cape Breton Region] 1990-99

Myrna Slater

Advisory Council Member 1985-89,
1992-94

Heather Tracey

Chair/President, People First of Nova Scotia

Verlie Wile

Feminist counselling service

Lorette Woolsey

Member of the 1975 Nova Scotia Task Force
on the Status of Women

FACILITATOR:**Susan Skjei**

Consultant with leaders of businesses, non-profit
organizations, and government agencies for over
20 years. She has also designed and taught classes,
workshops, and conferences at Regis University and
Naropa University in leadership and organization
development. She is a member of the Executive
Council and Director of Consulting for the
Shambhala Institute in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Advisory Council Members**Linda Carvery**

Advisory Council Member [Central]
1983-88, 2000-05

Mary Hamblin

Advisory Council Member [Central]
2002-05

Nancy Leaman

Advisory Council Member [Central]
2002-05

Patricia LeBlanc

Advisory Council Member [Cape Breton]
1996-05

Candy Palmater

Moderator: Young Women's Panel
Advisory Council Member [Fundy]
2002-05

Doreen Paris

Advisory Council Member [Highland]
1994-05

Sonja Power

Advisory Council Member [Fundy]
1999-04

Rita Warner

Advisory Council Member [Cape Breton]
1999-04

Advisory Council Chair 2001-03

Regrets: Liz Chisholm

Advisory Council Member [Highland]
2002-05

Advisory Council Staff**Christine Corston**

Librarian

Donia Krowchynski

Reception/Records Management

Margaret Liston

Assistant to Executive Director

Stella Lord

Policy and Research

Sandra McFadyen

Policy and Research

Lorrie Melanson-Jones

Fieldworker [Amherst]

Denise Moore

Coordinator Regional Services

Brigitte Neumann

Executive Director

Joy Warner

Fieldworker [Digby]



